Short Communications

The Wilson Journal of Ornithology 118(3):411–413, 2006

Breeding Range Extension of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in Quebec

Christophe Buidin,[1] Yann Rochepault,[1] Michel Savard,[2] and Jean-Pierre L. Savard[3,4]

ABSTRACT.—Although the breeding range of the Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is restricted to North America, the northern limits of its range are still unclear. In Quebec, the most northerly confirmed breeding records had come from the Saguenay area (Chicoutimi; 48° 25′ N, 71° 03′ W) in balsam fir- (*Abies balsamea*) white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) forest and on the Gaspé Peninsula (Amqui; 48° 28′ N, 67° 25′ W) in balsam fir-yellow birch (*B. alleghaniensis*) forest. Between 1998 and 2003, however, we documented nine Northern Saw-whet Owl nests in balsam fir-black spruce (*Picea marina*) forest in boreal Quebec on the Mingan Terraces. These records extend the species' known breeding range northward to >50° N. *Received 8 August 2005, accepted 24 March 2006.*

The breeding range of the Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is restricted to North America (Cannings 1993), and includes most of the southern Canadian forested areas, the mountainous regions of the United States, and the mountains of Mexico south to Oaxaca. The northernmost distribution of this species occurs along the Pacific coast, extending northward from British Columbia to south-central Alaska (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). However, the northern limit of its range remains unclear (Godfrey 1986, Cannings 1993). In Quebec, Northern Saw-whet Owls breed in all forested areas south of 49° N, with the exception of the Abitibi region (Côté and Bombardier 1996). Previously, the most northerly breeding records confirmed in Quebec came from the Saguenay area (Chicoutimi; 48° 25′ N, 71° 03′ W) in balsam fir- (*Abies balsamea*) white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) forest and on the Gaspé Peninsula (Amqui; 48° 28′ N, 67° 25′ W) in balsam fir-yellow birch (*B. alleghaniensis*) forest (Côté and Bombardier 1996). Seventeen records, however, in the 1979–1998 regional database housed at the Étude des populations d'oiseaux du Québec indicated that Northern Saw-whet Owls breed farther north in the Baie-Comeau area (49° 13′ N, 68° 09′ W) than what was published in the literature as their confirmed breeding range in Quebec (Côté and Bombardier 1996).

Between 1998 and 2003, we documented a northerly extension of the known breeding range of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in balsam fir-black spruce (*Picea marina*) forest in boreal Quebec, north of 50° N. During the 1997–1998 winter, we had erected 22 nest boxes for Boreal Owls (*Aegolius funereus*) in the Magpie River area (50° 19′ N, 64° 27′ W) and, during the 1998–1999 winter, we erected 51 nest boxes between the Manitou River (50° 19′ N, 65° 14′ W) and Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan (50° 17′ N, 64° 03′ W). From 1998 to 2003, we documented 9 Northern Saw-whet Owl nests (Table 1), as well as 15 Boreal Owl and 11 American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) nests, in the nest boxes. On 11 June 1998, we discovered the first Northern Saw-whet Owl nest, which contained a 1-year-old female brooding four young. That day, we banded the female at her nest, located at Rivière-Saint-Jean (50° 18′ N, 64° 22′ W); on 29 February 2000, the bird was recaptured in the United States at Port Elizabeth on Cape May, New Jersey (39° 18′ N, 74° 58′ W) (Patuxent Bird Banding Laboratory, Maryland). In 1999, we found three nest boxes occupied by Northern Saw-whet Owls. In one nest, egg-laying occurred in early April, and in two others it occurred at the beginning of May. On 15 December 1999, we captured a hatching-year male by using an audio lure and, on 24 June 2000, we found two partially hatched clutches, indicating that egg-laying had occurred between 22 and 26 May. No breeding attempts

[1] Assoc. le Balbuzard, 1 chemin du Grand Ruisseau, Rivière-Saint-Jean, QC G0G 1N0, Canada.

[2] Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac, 302 rue de la Rivière, Les Bergeronnes, QC G0T 1G0, Canada.

[3] Canadian Wildlife Service, 1141 Route de l'Église, P.O. Box 10100, Sainte-Foy, QC G1V 4H5, Canada.

[4] Corresponding author; e-mail: jean-pierre.savard@ec.gc.ca

TABLE 1. Nesting records for Northern Saw-whet Owls in the Mingan Region, Quebec (1998–2003).

Year	No. eggs	No. fledged	Location	Latitude (N)	Longitude (W)
1998	≥4	2	Rivière-Saint-Jean	50°20′31″	64°26′38″
1999	≥4	4	Rivière-Saint-Jean	50°18′03″	64°21′57″
1999	6	5	Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan	50°16′24″	64°08′44″
1999	4[a]	2	Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan	50°16′25″	64°08′45″
2000	3	2	Rivière-Saint-Jean	50°18′03″	64°21′55″
2000	3	3	Magpie River	50°19′12″	64°28′07″
2001[b]	—	—	—	—	—
2002[c]	≥1	≥1	Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan	50°16′06″	64°12′49″
2002	≥1	≥1	Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan	50°15′40″	64°09′41″
2003	6	6	Rivière-Saint-Jean	50°18′03″	64°21′55″

[a] Two eggs abandoned.
[b] No nesting attempts.
[c] In 2002, four other owl nesting attempts were recorded, but species was not determined (Association Le Balbuzard, Rivière-Saint-Jean, Quebec).

were recorded in 2001. During a post-breeding check of nest boxes in 2002, we found six *Aegolius* nests, including two Northern Saw-whet Owl nests—identified by the abandoned eggs and dead nestlings inside. Finally, on 23 July 2003, one partially hatched Northern Saw-whet Owl clutch (six eggs) was recorded at Rivière-Saint-Jean, suggesting that egg-laying likely occurred 21–26 June; on 24 August, three young had fledged and three were still in the nest box. Overall, the Northern Saw-whet Owl nests we found contained 4.4 eggs ± 1.5 SE (range = 3–6, n = 5) and fledged 3.4 young ± 1.6 SE (range = 2–6, n = 7). All nest boxes were located in forested habitats within 5 km of the St. Lawrence River. The area is underlain by old marine deposits and characterized by bogs, conifer forests (balsam fir-black spruce and balsam fir-white birch), and igneous rocky hills and terraces rarely >300 m in elevation. Egg-laying dates ranged from early April to late June, indicating variable breeding conditions between years.

The discovery of a Northern Saw-whet Owl nesting population on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River extends the species' known breeding range to >50° N latitude (Fig. 1). We have no data indicating that this represents a recent expansion of the owl's range; more likely, our observations are refinements of what is known about the limits of its nor-

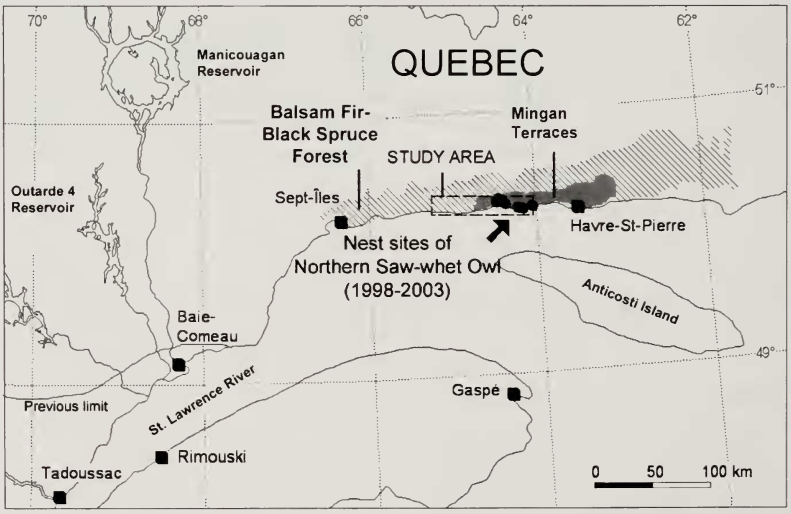

FIG. 1. Previous northern limit of known breeding range, and nest-site locations, of Northern Saw-whet Owls in the Mingan Region, north shore of the St. Lawrence River, Quebec (1998–2003).

mal range. The Mingan Terraces were thought to be inhabited primarily by Boreal Owls, although, both Boreal and Northern Saw-whet owls use coastal areas and even nest in similar habitats. Each fall, however, southern movements of Northern Saw-whet Owls are observed along the north shore of the St. Lawrence, whereas southern movements by Boreal Owls occur only about every 4 years (Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac: http://www.explos-nature.qc.ca/oot/index_f.htm).

In North America, the breeding ranges of Northern Saw-whet and Boreal owls overlap broadly in western mountain ranges, although Boreal Owls tend to occupy the higher elevations (Palmer 1986, Cannings 1993). In some years, Northern Saw-whet Owls establish territories adjacent to those of Boreal Owls at higher elevations in British Columbia (R. J. Cannings pers. comm.), and territorial overlap between the two species has been documented along the southern edge of the boreal forest in Minnesota (Lane and McKeown 1991). Clearly, the cohabitation of these closely related species in Quebec deserves further study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Canadian Wildlife Service, Ministère des Resources naturelles et de la Faune, Parc national du Saguenay, Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac, Explos-Nature, the Mingan Archipelago National Park, and the Caisse Populaire Desjardins de Mingan-Anticosti for their financial and logistical assistance and/or data. We thank M. Pierre-Alain Ravussin for his advice at the beginning of our nest-box program. We thank R. J. Cannings, J. S. Marks, B. Drolet, and an anonymous reviewer for their comments and M. Melançon for his help with the figure. We thank the volunteers that participated in the monitoring of nest boxes: S. Angel, M. Bourdon, M.-H. Lattaro, L. Lefebvre, and V. Vogel.

LITERATURE CITED

American Ornithologists' Union. 1998. Check-list of North American birds, 7th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Cannings, R. J. 1993. Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). The Birds of North America, no. 42.

Côté, A. and M. Bombardier. 1996. Northern Saw-whet Owl. Pages 618–621 *in* The breeding birds of Québec: atlas of the breeding birds of southern Québec (J. Gauthier and Y. Aubry, Eds.). Association québécoise des groupes d'ornithologues, Province of Québec Society for the Protection of Birds, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Québec Region, Montréal.

Godfrey, W. E. 1986. Birds of Canada, revised ed. National Museum of Natural Sciences, National Museums of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

Lane, B. and S. McKeown. 1991. Physical interactions between a male Boreal Owl and a male Northern Saw-whet Owl. Loon 63:74–75.

Palmer, D. A. 1986. Habitat selection, movements, and activity of Boreal and Saw-whet owls. M.Sc. thesis, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

The Wilson Journal of Ornithology 118(3):413–415, 2006

Carolina Wren Nest Successfully Parasitized by House Finch

Douglas R. Wood[1,3] and William A. Carter[2]

ABSTRACT.—We report the first observation of a House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) successfully parasitizing a Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) nest. On 24 May 2005, we found a Carolina Wren nest in south-central Oklahoma containing four Carolina Wren eggs and two House Finch eggs. The House Finch eggs hatched and nestlings grew rapidly. The Carolina Wren eggs hatched but the young did not survive. We observed a House Finch fledgling with the adult Carolina Wrens the day after fledging. *Received 29 August 2005, accepted 14 March 2006.*

[1] Southeastern Oklahoma State Univ., Dept. of Biological Sciences, PMB 4068, 1405 N. 4th Ave., Durant, OK 74701-0609, USA.

[2] P.O. Box 2209, Ada, OK 74821-2209, USA.

[3] Corresponding author; e-mail: dwood@sosu.edu

House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) expanded their range into central Oklahoma by the 1990s (Reinking 2004). Typically,